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Why Do People Love Religion More Than Christ?

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In our world today, we observe a troubling trend: many people have fallen deeply in love with religion and religious institutions, often at the expense of a true relationship with Christ. This phenomenon is not new, but it seems to be growing more pronounced in our time. When attempting to counsel others about religious heresy, particularly those religions established by individuals with malevolent intentions aimed at deceiving the faithful, reactions are often hostile. Instead of humbly accepting well-meaning advice, many become defensive or even aggressive. They are more inclined to defend their religious traditions than the teachings of Christ Himself. How did we arrive at such a state? Only God knows.

The Rise of False Religions and Teachers

The Bible warns us repeatedly about false prophets and teachers who would lead people astray. In Matthew 7:15, Jesus said, "*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.*" These false teachers establish religions that deviate from the truth of the Gospel, creating doctrines that cater to human desires rather than God's commandments.

The Apostle Paul also cautioned about this in 2 Timothy 4:3-4: "*For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*" This scripture vividly describes our current situation, where many people are drawn to teachings that resonate with their personal preferences rather than the unchanging truth of the Bible.

The Seductive Spirit of False Teachings

The allure of these false religions is often accompanied by a seductive spirit that draws people in while simultaneously distancing them from Christ. These religions offer a semblance of truth and spirituality but are ultimately devoid of the transformative power of the Gospel. They promise positions of power, recognition, titles, and degrees within the religious hierarchy, appealing to human pride and ambition.

In Colossians 2:8, Paul warns, "*See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.*" The love for religion over Christ is often rooted in a desire for worldly accolades and recognition, which are fleeting and ultimately meaningless in the light of eternity.

The Dangers of Religious Idolatry

Religious idolatry occurs when individuals place their faith in the institution of religion itself rather than in Christ. This idolatry is insidious because it masquerades as genuine devotion. However, it is fundamentally a form of self-worship, where the focus is on human achievements and status rather than on God's glory. Jeremiah 7:4 warns, "*Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.'*" Even in the Old Testament, people were cautioned against placing undue faith in religious institutions. True faith is about a personal relationship with God, grounded in humility and obedience to His Word.

Mockery and Persecution of Truth

It is disheartening to observe that speaking against false religions often leads to mockery and persecution, sometimes even to the point of death. This reaction contrasts sharply with the indifference many show towards blasphemy against Christ. Jesus Himself faced this during His earthly ministry, as He was often rejected and persecuted by the religious leaders of His time. In John 15:18-20, Jesus said, "*If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you... If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.*" The teachings of false prophets are crafted to ensnare people, making them fiercely loyal to the religious system while blinding them to the truth of Christ. This spiritual blindness is a profound tragedy, leading many away from the salvation that Christ offers.

The Attraction of Religious Traditions

Religious traditions, though often beautiful and meaningful, can become a stumbling block when they replace the core tenets of the Christian faith. Traditions in themselves are not inherently bad; they can enrich faith and community life. However, when adherence to tradition becomes more important than a relationship with Christ, it leads to spiritual stagnation. Jesus addressed this issue with the Pharisees in Mark 7:8-9: "*You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men. And he said to them, 'You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!'*" The Pharisees were so focused on their religious customs that they failed to recognize the Messiah standing before them.

The Need for Personal Transformation

True Christianity is not about external conformity to religious norms but about an internal transformation by the Holy Spirit. Romans 12:2 exhorts us, "*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*" This transformation is ongoing and requires a continual surrender to God's will. This transformation leads to a life characterized by the fruit of the Spirit, as outlined in Galatians 5:22-23: "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*" These qualities are the true markers of a Christian life, not religious titles or achievements.

Fighting for Eternal Promise

Amidst the battles for religious positions and recognition, the most crucial battle is often neglected: the fight for our eternal promise. In Matthew 6:33, Jesus instructs us to "*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*" Our primary focus should be on pursuing God's kingdom and His righteousness, not on earthly titles and accolades.

Conclusion

The love for religion over Christ is a pervasive issue that requires diligent prayer, wisdom, and courage to address. As believers, we must continually examine our hearts to ensure that our devotion is to Christ alone and not to any human institution. We must also lovingly and humbly counsel others, using the truth of God's Word to expose the deceptions of false religions. In doing so, we follow the example of Christ and His apostles, who faced persecution for the sake of the Gospel but remained steadfast in their mission. Let us remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:10, "*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" May we strive to live for the eternal promise, seeking to glorify God in all that we do.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, grant us the wisdom to discern truth from deception. Help us to place our faith in Christ alone and not in human institutions. Give us the courage to speak the truth in love, even in the face of persecution. May our lives reflect Your glory, and may we seek first Your kingdom and righteousness. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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